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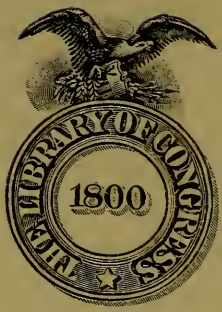
Buena Vista Windows

Jane Lippitt Patterson



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BUENA VISTA WINDOWS

BY

JANE LIPPITT PATTERSON

Boston Mass

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TO THE

LIVING FAITH AND SERVING LOVE

OF THE

· Roxbury · Universalist · Church ·

THESE VERSES

THE GROWTHS OF FAMILIAR ATMOSPHERE

ARE GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

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Buena Vista Windows

Buena Vista Windows

✠

THE restful shadows of a church I sought,
Built on a hill — for my heart's need was great.
The harvester with sickle keen had sat
Close by my door, and ripened sheaves he claimed
From my rich field, leaving my hunger nought
On which to feed, of all youth's seasons brought,
Or home's first love in childish accents named.

The hills give strength. Great kingly words
so prove.
And looking toward their sunlit slopes, some
power
To gird may steal into the life, before
All weak, irresolute. And better still
If a Christian temple lift its spire above
The firm, strong crest. What waiting hands
of love
To bind, to feed, on this fair Zion's Hill?

And so I sought the shadows; sat me down
With other hungry souls, and bowed my
head
To ask what I came seeking. Then, in-
stead
Of shadows, lo! a tremulous light stole
through

The church, and, pendent like a waiting
crown,
Above the altar all its glow made known,
And held my lifted eyes in transport new.

Was it light, or thought, or heart-beat, holding so
My gazing eyes? Transfiguration, or the voice
Once heard o'er Jordan's waters? To rejoice
Seemed the right atmosphere. Yes, thought, love, light,
Like arrows, pierced the mask of brooding woe,
Commanding it depart — as long ago
The demons heard and hastened out of sight.

Like one new-shriven of sins not yet so named,
But felt in weights, unrest and weariness,
I tarried a whole hour in this high stress ;
Then turned to view what earthly Paradise
In light and color round my being flamed
And all the passing congregation framed,—
And Buena Vista Windows met my eyes.

Rich grapes of Eschol, symbol and foretaste
Of meanings larger than the Prophet dreamed,
In tempting clusters where the sunlight streamed,

Spoke with the Prophet's accents once again :
"Ho ! ye, among life's desert sands who waste
The pregnant years, to living waters haste ;
Oh, come and be refreshed, ye sons of men !"

Soft, tremulous light my eager vision meets ;
When, lo ! a courier from the King of kings,
Heaven's wondrous promise borne on snowy wings,
Pauses a maiden's throbbing heart anear,
With emphasis divine the word repeats,

While blushing beauty angel grace entreats,
And countless worlds that promise list to
hear.

Revealing faces every thought uplift.
Madonna and the babe, in orient glow,
O'er fields of light their matchless beauty
show,
And kingdoms pale where Love is born
the King.
The silver stars bend near, and through
the rift
Made ample by the Virgin's heaven-sent
gift,
Angels descending tune their harps and
sing.

And now a vision of wondrous majesty—
Doctor and mitred Priest stern-faced and wise ;
Before them, questioning with innocent eyes,
A lad his anxious mother missed and sought.
Who answers — though in Law and History
Master of all his nation's learning he—
The lad's uplifted brow and luminous thought ?

With face compassionate, caressing arms,
Stands the Good Shepherd. On his heart at rest,
A lamb the wolves have chased in murderous quest,

And fright of wilderness to shelter driven.
Man, weak, and wounded by uncounted harms,
Trembling and doubting from the world's alarms,
In this clear symbol sees his sins forgiven.

Faith's horoscope! Twelve men in radiant guise,
With faces resolute and serious mien,
Jesus the Christ standing midway between,
As though to hold his own by love's strong band.
Far-reaching prophecies are in his eyes,
And on his lips his mission's great apprise,
"Go preach my truth to all, in every land!"

What glory hides earth's deepest shadow now !
The tomb-door folding Calvary's pain swings wide,
And Christ the Lord, on Friday crucified,
Stands in transfigured life on Sunday morn.
Mary, love's token 'neath her radiant brow,
And John belov'd, bear hence the witness-vow.
Men listen and abate their doubt and scorn.

Onward the tidings fly. Whole kingdoms kneel
And pay their homage to the risen Lord.

Even Rome the imperial sheathes her
blood-red sword,
And blind Judea listens. Her great son,
The persecutor, with his fiery zeal,
Sees light above the noon, hears Christ's
appeal,
Wins victories for his Lord none else has
won.

Promise and prophecy come crowding
here !
The Comforter, with dove-wings raying
light,
The rose, the passion-flower, the lily white
Wreathing the cross ; Peace hastening to
all lands ;

While Faith, in symbol anchor starry clear,
And witnessing angels robed in gold, appear,
And all the house a mount transfigured stands.

I seek the door, my soul a censer fine
Aflame with incense. But, arrest once more !
And I am chained beside the outer door.
The crowning glory for the heart bereft
In the vestibule uplifts its purple shrine,
And the sure Comforter in words divine
Illumes the hour when Joseph's tomb he left.

On Patmos' Isle His Revelator stands,
With face upturned, with attitude intent,
The seer's clear vision on the heavens bent,
While one hand clasps the book that 'scape no word
Of the God-sent message. People of all lands
Hush while he listens! Behold the happy bands
Unveiled by prophet-pen, — the Spirit's sword! —

"I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write,
Blessed are they who henceforth in the Lord,

Illumined by his resurrection word,
Shall die. Hunger no more, nor thirst, nor sun
With scorching heat, nor deluge rains, shall blight ;
But He who found life's throne beyond death's night
Shall lead and feed, while endless ages run.' ''

The hill, so grandly crowned, its help had given,—
No hurt, nor doubt, to cloud the onward tread
Of living love to green tents of the dead :

For, lo ! Immortal Life had been unsealed !
And reverent souls, following these signs, faith-riven,
The glory of color caught from dreams of heaven,
In Buena Vista Windows see GOD'S LOVE revealed.

The Old Roxbury Church

The Old Roxbury Church

Burned January 13, 1894

✠

"IT lived the years of a man," one said,
Yes, the years of a man, and more;
The silver shimmer about its head
Was the halo of seventy-four.

Those men of faith, did they ever dream
When brace and pillar they hewed,

When they shaped the rafter and laid the beam
And the frame of the temple viewed,—

When they closed it in with roof and wall,
And made it a place of rest
For the weary, burdened with life's hard thrall
And the hungry spirit's quest,—

That the fires would lap with hissing tongue
The beauty and strength they wrought,
And the requiem over the dead house sung
By the fiend of the flame be taught?

Through the even flow of the happy years
That measured this hoary pile,
No drip of a vengeful prophet's tears
Reaches the ear meanwhile.

The brave and noble of vanished days
To the ample shelter throng,
And the voices bearing the full heart's praise
Are tuned to an anthem strong.

Sages crowned with the snows of time
On its throne of thought have stood;
Youth, with the zeal of its hopeful prime,
Has wrought with the great and good.

And they who followed, and they who led
To the waters heavenly clear,

On love's immortal manna fed
With never a thought of fear.

It came as the awful crash of doom;
And our hearts beat sad and low
As the blackened walls of our Zion loom
O'er the white of the winter snow.

In many a city and hamlet far
Where the bitter tidings fly,
The guiding rays of the vanished star
Have lighted the morning sky

Of men of faith and women strong
Who the world's best thinking mould,
And their true lives make a triumph-song
As Miriam did of old.

The Old Roxbury Church

O shrine of a countless multitude
On earth and in heavenly ways,
For righteousness thy walls have stood;
Thy gates were gates of praise!

And these shall live! For souls have caught
The everlasting flame
Kept burning on thy throne of thought
In Christ's immortal name.

The Corner-Stone

The Corner-Stone

✠

THE Church of God in every zone,
By all the tongues of men confessed,
Upon the living Corner-Stone —
The Christ of Nazareth — firmly rests.

Yet men who build their living faith
In temples for Jehovah's praise,
Lay symbol corner-stones beneath
The lofty towers which they upraise.

Here, sealed for ages yet to be,
Are records of the time, the thought,
When boundless faith's heroic plea
With love's desire in grandeur wrought.

* "Come, show me the place
Where the corner-stone shall be laid
Of the church to fill, by its matchless grace,
The void which the fire-fiend made!

"The street I do not know,
Named for a Mexic town,
Where the fruitful apple-orchards grow
Which the builders must cut down."

* Mrs. William Curtis.

So we rode along the way,
Busy and danger-sown,
Seeking the spot where our faith shall lay
Its symbol, the corner-stone.

And, lo ! waist-deep in earth,
His hand upon the spade,
A man who had his mortal birth
Ere the old church stones were laid ! *

We hailed him standing there,
The spade in his good right hand ;
He answered with the reverent air
Of a doer of God's command.

* Joseph Hastings.

"I watched," said he, "for this hour,
For I wished to dig, alone,
The spot where the church shall build its tower
Over the corner-stone.

"Child, and youth, and man,
Until now I am nigh four-score,
I went where my soul's true life began,
To the old church's open door.

"Now, each day, I shall come,
Watching the workmen here,
Till I make of the good new house my home,
Familiar and heavenly dear.

"So I plant in the earth my gift,
The gift on this hopeful day
Of the love and faith which my heart uplift,
As I dig where the stone shall lay."

The street which bears the Mexic name,
And even the prostrate orchard-tree,
Faith, kindled to heroic flame,
In this man's living works can see.

And our dear church, in ages hoar,
The honored name and deed shall own
Of him whose valor at four-score
Made room to lay its corner-stone.

Hymn

Hymn

Laying the Corner Stone

✠

GOD of our fathers ! whom to know
Is life eternal, come, we pray,
And by thy love's transfiguring glow
Baptize our symbol rites to-day.

Thy guidance in the past we see,
Thy changeless truth, thy pitying grace,
And Faith would bring her gift to thee
Whose glory fills all time, all space.

Hymn.

Oh, may the walls which here shall rise
Cemented close from base to dome,
The strength and union symbolize
Of those who make thy house their home.

So shall thy Spirit's quickening power
Here, as a central light, be known,
And men and angels bless the hour
We laid in faith our corner-stone.

Roxbury Church

Roxbury Church

Read at the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary

✠

THE Prophets of our sacred past
In swift succession come and go ;
Their words the flying years outlast,
Borne on by life's resistless flow.

On Zion's towers we see the light
Revealing love's eternal sway,
And where were shadows of the night
The dawn of faith's triumphant day.

In countless hearts their praise is sung
Whom God has made his messengers,—
The sandaled feet, the flaming tongue,
The names enrolled among the stars.

But who like Miriam shall stand
Beside old wrong's divided flood,
And speak for the enfranchised band
Who once in night of bondage stood?

The grand procession of the years
That thronged the Temple's shining ways,
And built, with reverent prayers and tears,
The Prophet's words in lives of praise?

Strong men of truth no bribe could reach,
No sophist's tinsel breath could move,
Brave to endure, in patience teach
The victory of Immortal Love?

Their unsealed eyes new worlds beheld,
The Palestine of hopes untold;
And, as in wondrous days of eld,
They drank its streams and mined its gold.

They reaped, and passed its harvests on,
Increased, as faithful servants may,
From year to year, from sire to son,
And filled our granaries to-day.

Beside these men of stalwart truth
Fair women wrought in countless ways ;
They gleaned the harvest-fields like Ruth,
Like Miriam sang Jehovah's praise.

And never, where the curtains hung
O'er Hebrew tent or round its door,
Or tinkling bells in concert swung
When mitred Priest his ephod wore,

Was finer needlework displayed
Or incense costlier outpoured
Than these true hearts in reverence laid
Upon the altar of the Lord.

They filled the treasury o'er and o'er
When days were drear and lights burned low,
Home's prudent ways their only store
Love's flame in grateful deeds to show.

And by the altar-fire, apart
From the cold world's distracting gaze,
Unfailing strength for hand and heart
They found, in all life's toilsome ways.

They prayed and wrought in full accord
With the soul-currents deep and high
Which fed our Temple of the Lord
Through five-and-seventy years gone by.

And when in smouldering ruin lay
The sacred shrine our fathers blest,
With tearful eyes they looked away
In search of fairer hills of rest.

Their names in fadeless glory blaze ;
And while our house of God endures
Its radiant walls shall speak their praise
Whose work this crown of hope ensures.

The church whose stones with jewels shine
No tide of time can e'er remove,
Built from the soul's exhaustless mine
Of living faith and serving love.

Then, hail ! and crown the coming days
With glory greater than the past !
Your lives a hymn of noblest praise
Inspired by words the years outlast !

Saint Mary's Message

Saint Mary's Message

Read at the Church Reunion in 1893

✠

THE dawn with wavering shadows gray
O'er Hebron's height and Zion's towers
Led silently the promised day
Whose bells should strike immortal hours:

When softly, from her sleepless room,
Saint Mary sped in tearful guise,
Her sisters following, in the gloom
Of hearts bereft and blinded eyes.

Their feet the springing grasses pressed,
Their robes the lily's fragrance stirred,
The eaves where hung the swallows' nest
Low-bending sorrow's breathings heard.

The swallows chirped, and dreamed again ;
Not yet the hour for matin hymn :
'Tis they who watch in grief and pain
The night-dews kiss in shadows dim.

Saint Mary knew the rocky pass
Beneath the olive's grateful shade ;
Over against its gloom, alas !
She had watched while safe the tomb
was made.

This tomb the matchless form concealed
Of him whose daily walk and word
So nobly love's true life revealed
That men in gladness called him Lord.

To lay the emblems of love's gain
About his sacred feet once more,
Saint Mary, over leagues of pain,
Through drifts of gloom, her treasure bore.

And when she neared the olive's shade,
All bowed with sorrow's crushing fears,
A blinding light her anguish stayed,
A ray of hope shot through her tears.

"Fear not!" she heard the angel say,—
Her listening spirit caught the word,—
"Fear not! new light breaks on the way
Of him who seeks the risen Lord.

"Go quickly, tell his fleeing friends
The living Christ goes on before,
Through time, to earth's remotest ends,
Through death to life's immortal shore."

She ran,— this woman,— joy-impelled,
Her sisters following swiftly on,
When, lo! her happy eyes beheld
The Lord's face lighting all the dawn!

He spoke again the fearless word
Saint Mary bore embalmed in myrrh,

As round his feet the grasses stirred
Where knelt his waiting messenger.

Then on from prayer she sped, upborne
By hopes which earthly shadows flee,
And preached the resurrection-morn
To all the twelve in Galilee.

Saint Mary's message, angel-given,
Baptized anew by Christ's own word,
Comes down the centuries sorrow-riven,
Earth's wailing hearts with hope to gird.

Prophets and leaders come and go,
Lover and friend death's shadows chill,
But never change his word can know
Who in his church abideth still.

The dawn is past, the matin sung ;
High noon comes o'er the hills apace ;
And, nestling airs of Spring among,
The Easter lilies find their grace.

And fed by dews Christ's love distils,
The Marys live to speak his word,
To bear the light from heavenly hills,
And run on errands for the Lord.

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